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MEMOIRS

OF

K CHARETTE,

CHIEF OF THE ROYAL AND CHRISTIAN ARMIES

IN THE

INTERIOR OF FRANCE :

CONTAINING

ANECDOTES OF HIS PRIVATE LIFE,

AND

DETAILS OF THE WAR

IN

LA VENDEE.

BY AN EMIGRANT OF DISTINCTION.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH.

" His saltem accumulem donis, et fungar inani

" Munere."——VIRGIL.

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BY THE

TRANSLATOR.

THE worth of talents and virtue is independent of the cause in which they are engaged. Without participating, therefore, in the sentiments of the French Royalists, without looking complacently on the horrors of a civil war, it may be allowable to pay a tribute of applause to the valour and abilities of CHARETTE. The character of the Vendean hero is portrayed with an elegant, though perhaps a too friendly, pencil in the following little sketch. But little is to be apprehended from decking virtue in splendid colours; it is from the envious and prejudiced coldness of the historian that we have to fear those productions

tions which deaden the flame of genius by degrading the illustrious examples of patriotism and virtue.

We may at least draw some useful lessons from the melancholy picture of the war in La Vendée. We may learn that nothing is more dreadful in a nation than the violence of party spirit; and that unrelenting persecution on one side necessarily produces unyielding fury on the other. Nor can we omit to observe, that, terrible as are the evils of war, even these are alleviated by moderation and benevolence; while the revolutionary cruelty of the **Noyades* and *Fusillades* is beheld with horror, and the names of Le Bon and Carrier are pronounced with disgust, all parties agree in praising the moderation displayed in so many instances by CHARETTE.

* Drowning and shooting.

PREFACE

P R E F A C E

BY THE

AUTHOR.

I Have every day expected to see some pen display its eloquence, in praise of a man so worthy of our admiration and regret as the illustrious Charette. This silence, doubtless, arises from the difficulty of procuring information relative to his exploits, from the moment of their commencement until the termination of his glorious career. Educated in habits of intimacy with him from my tenderest infancy, nothing which concerns him is unknown to me ; and the exact and continued correspondence, which I have kept up with him ever since our separation, has enabled me to keep him in view through all the

the different situations of his life. Of this correspondence, I shall lay before the public all that relates to this celebrated man, convinced that it cannot but prove universally interesting.

It is not with the confidence of an author, that I begin this undertaking; it is evident I have too little pretension to that character. Not being ambitious of literary fame, I have little to fear from criticism. In rendering homage to friendship, I write for the satisfaction of my own mind, which feels a sensible pleasure in scattering some flowers on the tomb of my friend.

MEMOIRS

OF

CHARETTE,

Éc. Éc.

CHARETTE is dead! Weep, faithful subjects; religion has lost her most zealous defender, the monarchy its firmest support, the oppressed a protector, the unhappy a father. Weep! he has borne with him your esteem, your admiration, perhaps, alas! your hopes; he has left behind him nothing but sorrow and regret! If my talents equalled the sensibility which fills my soul, I should easily excite the sensibility of my readers; I should cause them to shed those tears which gratitude and friendship love to pour upon his tomb.—But what do I say?—The panegyrist of Charette has no need of the magic of

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compo-

composition, of the fictions invented at will to move and strike the passions;—no! by relating simple facts, by following this great man from his youth until the moment which terminated his days, I shall oblige even his enemies to grant him their esteem; and, perhaps, I shall have the consolation of hearing them mix their sighs with the mournful accents of my grief.

Charette was about thirty-three years of age; his height was five feet ten inches; his figure well set, firm, and graceful; his eyes lively; his look bold, but without any harshness; the paleness of his complexion indicated the delicacy of his health; his language was soft without being affected; his smile pleasing; his manners affable; he possessed a good natural genius, enriched by education, and had the happy art of gaining friends, and preserving them till death.

Great men have generally required an ample theatre in which to exercise their talents and their virtues; but the narrow circle of La Vendée sufficed to immortalize Charette:

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it was within these narrow bounds, that he displayed all the depth of his genius, together with that courage, that truly heroic perseverance, and those noble and elevated views which gained him the admiration of Europe. From the banks of the Loire to those of the Vistula has fame published his illustrious deeds; and the invincible hero of the North* has with pleasure rendered homage to the valour and fidelity of the defender of the religion of his fathers, and the honour of his kings.

Charette, sprung from an ancient family, allied to the noblest houses†, felt at an early age that a distinguished birth imposes great obligations; the alliance which his ancestors had contracted with the illustrious name of Montmorency excited his ambition to equal that first Christian baron who conquered for his religion and his king, in the field of

* See the letter of General Suwarrow to Charette, dated Oct. 1, 1796, in the *Mercure Universel*.

† The family of Charette has been several times connected by marriage with that of Montmorency.

Tolbiac;

Tolbiac ; and Charette in like manner, surrounded by his faithful Bretons, braved death in support of the same cause.

His ancestors were distinguished in the magistracy and in arms* ; he chose the latter himself, and the naval service which requires deep study and assiduous application, was admirably suited to the cool and steady character of Charette : scarcely therefore had he completed his sixteenth year, when he passed the examinations which were necessary to admit him into this distinguished body.

The day in which his name was enrolled among the number of the defenders of the state, was to him a day of happiness. His ge-

* Several magistrates of this family have been conspicuous in the parliament of Brittany. In the campaign of Bohemia ten of the Charettes served, of whom seven lost their lives. This family has had the honour of producing several Knights of Malta ; the eldest branch bears the title of Marquis, which was granted by Louis XV. as a recompense for their services ; this title is, indeed, frequently assumed at pleasure, but in Brittany no one dares take it who cannot prove his right to it.

nus expanded, his ideas became sublime, as he contemplated the vast ocean; he examined with attention; he meditated with advantage; even his pleasures tended to the acquirement of knowledge and instruction. Let us follow him into the plains of America, where at that time cruel war spread its devastation; and we shall see him exercise that intrepid courage, that innate valour, that benevolent and disinterested humanity, which are not found in common minds.

At the surrender of a village (which the English had defended with their accustomed bravery; but where, notwithstanding their resistance, they were conquered) the soldiers rushed with fury on the field of battle, and sought revenge for the opposition they had experienced. Piercing cries are heard, Charette flies with the rapidity of lightning, forces his way through the assailants, and reaches an apartment where two unhappy women stood in an agony of grief, whilst an intrepid young man defended them, and dispersed with his sword all those who had the temerity to approach; but when he saw
a French

a French officer, he advanced towards him with that noble confidence which virtue preserves in the hour of misfortune; "I yield to you," said he; "I would have sacrificed my life in defence of my mother and my sister; but you will now be their defender and support. In placing them under the protection of French honour, my mind is free from all uneasiness." Thus did the immortal Bayard, the chevalier, "without fear and without reproach," protect distressed virtue, and refuse the gifts which gratitude would have conferred. Such was Charette amidst this grateful family: the Englishman became his friend, the mother could not refuse him her esteem, and the interesting beauty could not see without emotions of tenderness him who had defended her honour and her life. But the trumpet of war is heard, imperious duty commands him to depart; the vessel leaves the shore, the tender fair one gazes with anxiety on the receding bark, and when she no longer beholds it, pronounces with affection the name of her generous protector. This event was ever remembered by

Charette

Charette with pleasure, and he always spoke of it with sensibility, but with that modesty natural to a noble mind, which in performing a sublime action, thinks it has done nothing of which the generality of mankind is incapable.

Charette hastened to new combats, and to new triumphs; in every situation, his conduct obtained the esteem and approbation of his commanders, the friendship of his equals, the attachment and respect of those who were under his command.

In this busy and glorious war, he signalized himself on many occasions; calm and tranquil amidst dangers, he meditated on events in silence, and success or misfortune were to him an equal source of reflection.

Louis XVI. triumphant, but still benevolent and humane, wished to terminate those calamities which are the inevitable consequences of war, by restoring tranquility to the two worlds, peace to Europe,
activity

activity to commerce and agriculture; he proposed peace; it was accepted. He took advantage of this repose to restore the arts to their former vigour, to encourage the sciences, to increase the manufactures, and to revive, not the conquering genius of Louis the Fourteenth, but that age of knowledge which elevated this superb, but unfortunate, empire above all other nations.

Charette was no longer able to acquire glory in arms, but he would not consume his hours in useless inactivity; he felt that application is indispensibly necessary to him who is ambitious of filling an exalted station; he studied, he meditated on the histories of illustrious men, of celebrated navigators, and reaped in so fruitful a field, that knowledge, and those talents, which will at a future period immortalize his name. Nor did he deem beneath his attention those voyages designed for the instruction of sailors; they afforded him new information, and he soon became as well acquainted with the North seas as with the vast ocean he had so often navigated.

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The æra of the misfortunes of France was that in which Charette was compelled to relinquish his situation ; he returned home to enjoy the consolations of friendship. Death had deprived him of his parents. As the faithful dove languishes and sinks under the pressure of her grief, so this happy pair could not support a cruel separation, and the grave soon re-united two tender hearts, which nature seemed to have formed for the happiness of each other. In the affection of a valued sister, and a beloved brother, he sought the consolation necessary to his existence, and they both regarded as a blessing the inactivity to which he was condemned, since it procured them the happiness of his society.

It was only necessary to see Charette, to destroy the idea so generally entertained of the roughness of a sailor. The more this opinion prevailed, the more did it excite astonishment to see in him that urbanity, that mildness, that sensibility, as pleasing as it is interesting, and which has so much power over that enchanting sex to
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whom nature has been so prodigal of her gifts. It was to his amiable qualities that Charette owed his fortune, and his happiness. His circumstances had been far from affluent, though they were regulated with sufficient œconomy to prevent his being involved in debt. The young and interesting widow of his relation Mons. Charette de B. (an officer in the regiment of Auvergne) could not behold him without affection: she married him, and brought him a considerable accession to his fortune. Charette, by his tender attentions, caused the happiness of his wife, and love blessed the ties which he had formed.

His residence in the country afforded him a thousand gratifications, which though disdained by the wealthy, are remembered with delight by the virtuous mind; to assist the poor, to relieve the unfortunate, to compromise ruinous law-suits, to repair the losses of the industrious cottager; and thus was each day marked by some act of benevolence and humanity.

A lovely infant added a stronger tie to
their

their union, Charette, a faithful lover and a tender husband, could not fail to be an affectionate father: he embraced his child, pressed him to his heart, and presented him as an offering to that God who had protected him through every danger, to that kingdom for which he had exposed his life, and to that king whom he served with so much valour and fidelity. But Providence, which proves our virtue by the misfortunes it inflicts, destined his paternal feelings to the severest wound in the death of this beloved child.

Time could not relieve, nor friendship calm his sorrows; the melancholy remembrance triumphed over every effort; and nothing but the great events which were at hand, could rouse him from the stupor into which he had fallen.

Already had discord lighted her fatal torch, to destroy this once flourishing empire: already were the temples profaned, religion despised, its ministers persecuted, and the nobility who remained faithful to their king thrown into unwholesome prisons,

sons, whilst their possessions were pillaged and given to the flames. Among the number of the imprisoned were Mons. Charette de Br—— and Mons. Charette de B. F. D——, one aged sixty-nine, the other seventy-two; the former died in the prison of Nantes, the latter in that of Angers.

I will not dwell on the particulars of a revolution of which history can offer no parallel: its dreadful effects are known to the universe. It was the cause of his God; it was the cause of his king, which wanted defenders: could Charette be deaf to the call of honour? He tore himself in agony from the arms of an adored wife; her tears, her entreaties, even the idea of the dreary solitude to which she must be condemned by the loss of her son, and the absence of her husband, could not restrain him; he flew to join the faithful Frenchmen assembled at Coblenz, under the sacred standard of Royalty*.

* I will not enlarge on the causes and necessity of the emigration which took place, they are too well known; but if any person wishes for further information, he may refer to the works of a celebrated writer Mons. Mallet du Pan.

But

But Charette found not among strangers the same noble enthusiasm which animated his own breast. He saw in others an icy coldness compared with the ardour which he felt. Their political discussions, their delays, excited his indignation; and he returned to his own country convinced it was only in the hearts of Frenchmen that he could find that sublime heroism which could brave every danger to revenge the unmerited sufferings of their monarch.

Young, and unknown, without that shining reputation which attracts and subjugates the public mind, he could only meditate in silence the vast schemes which he proposed to execute; and the more his courage prompted him to undertake them, the greater their difficulties appeared. To obtain confidence was the first point; but how could he dare to flatter himself that he should inspire it? The armies of the allies were now in motion; those of the rebels no sooner appeared in Flanders than they were defeated. The Imperial and Prussian Eagles were erected in the plains of Champagne:

thirty

thirty thousand emigrants, the flower of the French nobility, eager to signalize themselves and to dispute the palm of valour with the intrepid soldiers of the Cæsars, predicted that the chains of the best of kings would soon be broken, and France be again happy under his reign. When, Oh unexpected blow! the retreat was ordered.—O wisdom of Omnipotence, who can penetrate thy immutable decrees? The Conventionists, exulting in their conquests, ruled with a rod of iron the unfortunate Bretons, ever celebrated for their attachment to their sovereigns*.

Reduced to despair by the *requisitions*, oppressed by a thousand arbitrary vexations, they in some measure forced the gentlemen who still retained their estates to put themselves at their head. The coalition which had been formed in Poitou and Brittany, of which Mons. de R—— was the chief (and

* Brittany was the only province whose nobility would not send deputies to the States-General in 1789, because they were not assembled according to the laws of the realm.

of which Charette was a member) had not yet established itself on so firm a basis as was necessary for so great an enterprise, but it was of importance to profit by the discontent testified in the country; already Gaston, the intrepid Gaston, at the head of forty brave men, had defended his canton against these exactions. He soon fell; but his name survived, and was long the rallying cry of the Royalists*.

This industrious and valiant people were not furnished with arms; but they soon found the means of procuring them. Each cottage became a workshop, and the iron groaned under the repeated blows of the hammer. The tools of agriculture, coarsely fashioned, became tremendous weapons, with which they faced death, and vanquished their enemies. The first arms of the Roy-

* Gaston was a hair-dresser, a native of Rhodéz, but who had long been settled in Brittany: we forget his origin when we consider the nobleness of his sentiments. Those who serve their country with honour have no need of illustrious ancestors. He was succeeded by a Marshal de Redon, who did not long survive him.

alists were clubs pointed with iron, and prongs. Scythes bent served them for sabres, their horses without saddles were guided by a cord; with these weak resources they obtained by their victories two hundred pieces of cannon and more than eighty thousand muskets.

O illustrious defenders of the religion of your ancestors, and the throne of your kings! why cannot I pursue the relation of your exploits?

Generous Bonchamp, virtuous Delbè, indefatigable Talmont, valiant Lescure, intrepid la Roche Jaquelin, brave Stoflet*!—but history will render you the homage which is your due as heroes: affection can only strew a few flowers on your tomb as friends.

* To the names of these illustrious chiefs may be added those of Piron de Massenge, Villeneuve, Keller, la Guerinier, Boissin, Guignard de Tifanges, Forestieres, Cathelineau, d'Autichamp, Dessessart, Bernard de Marigni, Langrenier, Herboldt, l'Oiseau, &c.

The

The inhabitants assembled in crowds; and all swore to die in support of that sacred cause which they had resolved to defend. Alas! this was not a trivial oath! The devastation of this unfortunate country attests too plainly that its inhabitants preferred death to perjury. The scaffold itself could not appal these truly heroic souls. In the sitting of the Convention of the 6th of August 1793, a member arrived from La Vendee thus expressed himself; "Think not they (the Royalists) will return from their error; a prisoner taken at Martigné would never cry *Vive la Republique*; twelve soldiers held their bayonets to his breast, but he still continued to repeat *Vive le Roi*: wearied with so much resistance we dispatched him with repeated stabs."

These circumstances disquieted the Conventionists: they sent some battalions, persuaded that the appearance of the military would be sufficient to disperse those popular parties which were found in every village. The resistance which they met with determined them to use more violent means.

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Then

Then it was that they adopted the system of terror: every house in which they could not find the master of the family was pillaged, the cattle were taken away, and the women suffered the most dreadful insults.

To take away all pretence for reproach, the Royalists determined to make some proposals to their enemies; they demanded the restitution of their priests, and their religion, and the exemption of their persons from requisition. "No," replied their oppressors, "submission, or death:" this answer was the signal for carnage; the Conventionals have no longer men to contend with, but raging lions, whom the certainty of death cannot restrain. They precipitate themselves upon the thick phalanx of their enemies, seize their arms, take possession of their cannons, and use them to complete their victory. The first success augmented considerably the Christian army; the oppressed Cantons demanded their assistance, and offered to join them. A large territory was conquered by their valour, and order was restored by the introduction of wise laws.

laws. A general council* was established to direct the plans and to provide for the wants of the army: each parish had also a particular council which was subordinate to the general council; and the proclamations, the raising taxes, and every thing relative to government was carried in the name of Louis XVII.

The royal army, in number about sixty thousand, consisted of four divisions†. They bore as their standard the sacred sign of the cross. After repeated successes they arrived at Saumur; here a new species of combat awaited them: they had ditches to cross, walls and ramparts to scale; but nothing could withstand the defenders of religion; nothing could resist the cry of "*The sword*

* The military council was composed of twelve principal officers, of which Mons. Delbè was president. The president of the general council was the Bishop of Agra; Mons. Carriere, was procurator-general; and Mons. Jagn, secretary.

† That which Charette commanded was called for a long time by the name of Gaston; his humility did not wish to destroy this error.

" of

“ of God, and of Louis his servant.” The assailants climbed with incredible difficulty up every part of the walls, and they even found a passage through the openings where the cannons were planted. At length the white flag waved on the most elevated towers, and the cry of *Vive le Roi* resounded through the city. The Swiss and German prisoners were set at liberty; and all were importunate to be permitted to serve with their glorious defenders. These soldiers, and those who joined them, formed a corps of between seven and eight thousand men; they were the only hired troops, and were always in the army of Charette, to whose success the natural bravery of the Germans did not a little contribute. The surrender of Saumur furnished the Royalists with artillery, arms, horses, and provisions of all kinds. O unfortunate fields of Doué, Brissac, St. Florent, Luçon, and Machecoul! You who were bathed with the blood of Frenchmen, relate what heroic actions, what prodigies of valour you witnessed! Those actions are indeed too numerous to be described; but at least the humanity of the
Christian

Christian heroes cannot pass unnoticed. The Royalists caused the hair of their prisoners to be cut off, and then set them at liberty, under a promise that they should not bear arms during the war.—Whilst the Conventionals—see the decree which condemns the emigrants, taken in arms, to death.

General Bonchamp, when mortally wounded, marked his last moments by an act of generosity; he gave liberty to five thousand prisoners detained at St. Florent.

The Convention, unable to reduce the Royalists by the sword, resolved to employ fire. On the 4th of August 1793, that decree was passed, which it is impossible to read without horror: it enacted, that the castles, the villages, and the woods possessed by the rebels, should be burnt, and that the corn should be carried into the interior of the Republic. Each column carried before it the flaming torch; an immense number of persons perished, and a tract of country of more than twenty leagues in circumference,

ference, became a prey to the flames*. A hundred thousand souls, women, children, and old men, fled to the catholic army to escape violence and death. So many useless persons, though a great burthen to the army, were notwithstanding received with the compassion due to the unfortunate.

This humane action was the cause of the defeat at Mans. So great a multitude consumed a great part of the provisions, and retarded the movements of the army. Charette, who was appointed to guard the left bank of the Loire, had no part in that unfortunate expedition. At that time, with a body of only twenty-five thousand men, he kept in check two hundred and forty thousand, of whom, indeed, a part were soldiers of the Requisition: but these latter had nothing to fear; even had he conquered, they would have received protection and not punishment from their victors. Such was the conduct of the great Henry when he harangued his invincible troops with such

* Memoirs of Danican.

humanity,

humanity, " My friends, spare not your
 " foreign enemies, but save your country-
 " men, save the French !"

In the same manner Charette distinguished the enemies of God, from those whom tyranny had forced into the field. It was only the assassins of his king whom he did not consider as Frenchmen. In one of those sanguinary battles he turned away the cannon from those unfortunate men who had been compelled to march against him, and only dispersed them by some detachments of cavalry. It has been already mentioned, that the Royalists only shaved the hair of their prisoners, while those who fell into the hands of the Conventionals received no quarter; and for this purpose they invented an unheard-of species of murder. Such was the punishment called *Noyades*. " I
 " declare," says Danican, " that the Vendéans
 " have taken more than thirty thousand pri-
 " soners from us, whom they have sent back
 " with only the loss of their hair, and that
 " they committed no cruelty till after we
 " had set them the example."

On

On the 5th of August Le Quinio wrote thus to the Convention: "I have caused
 " five hundred prisoners to be shot and
 " drowned at Fontenai le Peuple." Le
 Vasseur de la Sarthe caused seven hundred
 prisoners to be shot and drowned between
 Saumur and Orleans, in parties from fifty
 or sixty to a hundred. The commissioner
 Garnier wrote thus to the Convention on
 the 10th of December: "I have caused
 " fifty-eight priests to be drowned." The
 same person wrote on the 28th of November
 1793, "Ninety priests have just been
 " brought to me, I have drowned them,
 " *which has given me great pleasure.*" Bar-
 rère in his report on the 25th of October
 says, "La Vendee exists no longer: this
 " country is now a vast desert: we have
 " retaken eight thousand prisoners." From
 whence it is evident that the Royalists did
 not shoot those whom they captured. In
 vain did Charette remonstrate against these
 atrocities; neither his representations nor
 his menaces were regarded: he resolved to
 shew an example of severity; an act with
 which he has often reproached himself, be-
 cause

cause it did not produce the effect which he expected. At the taking of Machecoul, after having been wounded, and having had two horses killed under him, whilst he was giving thanks to the God of armies upon the field of battle, he was informed that the Conventionalists had taken three prisoners, two peasants and an emigrant. He proposed to give in exchange for them five hundred which were in his power, protesting that he would give no quarter unless they were returned. Instead of an answer to his proposal, the victims were brought forward and shot in the sight of his negotiator. At this recital Charette was unable to restrain the fury of his enraged soldiers; they rushed on the five hundred prisoners, and sacrificed them to the shades of their unfortunate companions. From this epoch, the war assumed a character infinitely more savage than that of the Vandals. The presence of the commander alone could stop the progress of these outrages; when he was absent, the furious soldiers breathed only vengeance and despair.

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The reduction of Machecoul paved the way to new successes. Charette proceeded along the coast, and with the assistance of boats and rafts, which his indefatigable troops constructed for him, he made himself master of the isles of Bouin and Noirmoutier, where the enemy had amassed large magazines of provisions and ammunition; the Royalists hoped to be able to make it their head-quarters, but this post was too important not to be subject to the attacks of the Conventionalists; they besieged it by land and sea, and though it was defended with the utmost bravery, the Royalists were obliged to evacuate it. The retreat was hazardous; several boats were destroyed by the cannon of the enemy; they were obliged to escape on the wrecks under a heavy fire from the musketry, and to make their way through numerous battalions which lined the shore. Charette, at the head of his brave troops, gave the example, to equal which they surpassed their usual intrepidity.

. How painful was this scene to the generous heart of the hero! the sick and wounded,

wounded, together with the rear guard, were surrounded, and one thousand eight hundred were made prisoners, among whom was the brave Stoflet.

Alas ! he was too fatally convinced from the event of Machecoul of the destiny that awaited them*. He could not even hope to exchange them for three thousand Conventionalists whom he had taken in different skirmishes. The brave Stoflet, who had discovered such noble sentiments, such brilliant talents; was among those who were destined to this barbarous massacre ; this dreadful idea tormented Charette, until a dawn of hope in some degree restored peace to his mind. Stoflet was still unknown ; his protector founded his hope on the enemy's want of penetration, who could not, like him, discover and appreciate virtue and merit. He ventured to demand him clandestinely, threatening at the same time to put to death three thousand prisoners, in

* They were all shot or drowned by order of Thureau and Bourbotte. See the memoirs of Danican, note 15.

case of refusal. He receives no answer; could he resolve to make the sacrifice which he had threatened? No; cruelty and revenge were repugnant to the feelings of his soul—he framed excuses for his enemies; he whom he wished to save had, perhaps, fallen the victim of his courage—his letter might not have been received. Happily his sensibility had not long to sustain this painful conflict. Stoflet regained his liberty; he had the address to deceive the vigilance of his guards; or rather, we may believe, that the fate of three thousand individuals touched the hitherto inflexible heart of his gaoler; and that he connived at an escape which would save the lives of so many unfortunate men.

What unexpected felicity for Charette! He sees his friend, he embraces him, and may now follow the dictates of his generosity by giving liberty to his prisoners. The foldier readily obeys the commands of his captain; with one hand he wipes away the tear which fell for the death of his companions, and with the other he breaks the bonds

bonds of those who were designed to be sacrificed to his revenge.

If the Royalists had cause for regret in the death of their companions in arms, they saw with satisfaction that some sentiments of honour still existed in the breasts of those who were sent to oppose them. Independently of these sentiments, the humanity of Charette increased the number of his partizans daily; whole corps joined him; even the prospect of certain death could not intimidate them; the Almighty gave them fortitude in proportion as they felt compassion for the situation of their king.

La Vendée scarcely perceived the losses it had sustained; the Conventionalists could not boast the same advantages. It was at this period that Brulé wrote thus to the Convention, "Other generals not less dangerous, are the old soldiers who suffer themselves to be led astray by the suggestions of aristocracy."

If,

If, said the Republicans, we have not yet had all the success we might have promised ourselves, it is because we have only sent undisciplined troops into the field; but the immortal garrison of Mentz, whose valour has been proved, will soon exterminate these hordes of fanatics and robbers from the territories of the republic.

As the scattered clouds in the horizon unite over our heads, and petrify with terror the weak and timid when they burst in thunder, so these impetuous soldiers assemble; their devastating voice is heard from afar, the fierceness of their looks inspire horror, and all seek an asylum which may conceal them from men familiarized with battles and with carnage.

This new scourge is directed against La Vendée; but Charette sees it without emotion. Like a skilful general, he chooses the most advantageous posts, penetrates into the woods, and confines his army within narrow bounds. The enemy follows with ardour, supposing he has been forced to retreat:

retreat: no sooner have they entered this narrow part of the country than their artillery is useless; each step ensnares them; harassed incessantly by the peasants, who know all the defiles, they endeavour to retire, but it is too late,—the roads are destroyed; in short, they all fall by the avenging sword of the Vendéans, or by the famine which was inevitable in a country that their own hands had desolated. I have been assured by many eye-witnesses on each side, that not ten men of the garrison of Mentz returned.

The defeats at Mans, the battles of Grandville, &c. had extremely weakened the Christian army on the right bank of the Loire. Charette sent some of his officers to collect the remainder; the brave Stoflet was of the number; he became at length the commander, and put in practice the lessons he had received from the hero whose friend he was.

This title would be a sufficient eulogium; but posterity will, without doubt, assign him
a distin-

a distinguished place among those illustrious foreigners who have offered their services to France.

This division had already weakened Charette's army. Cathelineau excited Brittany to arms, and the Vendean army supplied commanders. Other parties of Royalists, now known by the name of Chouans, detached themselves from the forces which no longer appeared a formidable body. This was undoubtedly the cause of the misfortunes which the Catholic armies experienced, who, before this epoch, numbered their battles by their victories.

Lower Brittany produced the Chouans; they consisted, at first, of a few unfortunate men, who took refuge in the woods to escape the requisitions, and who only ventured out at night to procure subsistence; they were for this reason called *Chat-huans* (owls) from which is derived the word Chouans. They are now very numerous, and extend from Brest to Chartres. Experience has taught them that humanity has rather

rather been prejudicial than advantageous to the Vendéans ; at present they equal the Republicans in cruelty, and neither side ever give quarter.

The people of Brittany are a separate nation ; they possess great energy of character, are religious, hospitable, firm in their enterprises, and of unshaken bravery. The men are small, but strong and vigorous : even their amusements are manly ; they consist of leaping, wrestling, and quoits. Their common weapon is a club, three feet and a half long, pointed at each end with iron ; they manage this so dexterously, that they fear nothing but fire-arms. It is rare to find a countryman who speaks French ; and they look with contempt on all who do not speak their language, which is very similar to the Welsh. Kindness attaches them ; but oppression irritates, and renders them violent. From the knowledge I have of this province, I can affirm, that it may, like La Vendée, be destroyed, but it will never submit. This is not a paradox ; a people equally energetic and religious will not yield to force.

The inhabitants of Cevennes, who resisted Louis XII. and the Corsicans, who resisted the efforts of France, afford examples of this truth. Brittany may perish, but it will never adopt the Republican system.

The Convention, who despaired of obliging Charette to surrender, and feared the ruin of its own armies, determined to make him proposals of peace. The hero, guided only by his sensibility, would have esteemed that day the happiest of his life, in which he should stop the effusion of his country's blood; firm in his principles, he did not forget the noble motive which made him take up arms; he once more demanded the re-establishment of religion, the recall of its ministers, indemnification to all those whose possessions had been destroyed, and an amnesty for all who had shared his fatigues and dangers, so that neither informations or reproaches might poison the general happiness.

But could Charette forget the son of his august master, his lawful king, for whom
he

he had exposed his life a thousand times, and who languished in that fatal tower from which his father was conducted to the scaffold? No—take courage, ye in whose souls sensibility and virtue yet are found; you will always find Charette worthy of you, and of himself. The royal child had not a more faithful subject, or a more intrepid defender. Charette would have died, if such a sacrifice had been necessary; but he could never desert the son of his king, the inheritor of his throne, and of his virtues.

This important article caused great debates. Could Charette yield? He had already shed his blood in this noble cause; he would have lost the last drop of it rather than have committed an unworthy action. Even the reflection, that his native city was exposed to all the horrors of famine, that his friends were in irons, his distracted family groaning in a dungeon, could not shake his principles. His soul was torn with conflicting passions, but stern duty silenced the sentiments of nature, and he owned only his God and his king.

The

The negotiating commissioners proved to him the impossibility of bringing the Convention to his terms. The majority were well disposed, but the time was not favourable to the accomplishment of their purpose. Robespierre still seemed to reign in the persons of his partisans; to have proposed royalty would have caused the resurrection of that monster. Well, replied the young hero, with noble enthusiasm, give to my protection the grandson of Maria Theresa, and what the brave Hungarians did for her, the faithful Bretons will do for him.

Either from the difficulty of terminating otherwise the negotiations, or from want of sincerity, this important point was agreed to. On this condition only would Charette set up the Republican colours, or sit by the side of the murderers of his king*.

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* Care was taken not to mention this article in the examination of Charette, or to publish any thing that related to this condition; at least, the affair was treated so lightly, that it was evident they did not wish for much information

As soon as the treaty was concluded, the blockade of Nantes was raised. Charette entered the city amidst the acclamations of the people. Profusion followed him; peace and happiness were restored; the tears which were shed were no longer those of despair, but those produced by the expectation of that happiness which peace and harmony bestow.

Thus the commander of La Vendée is no longer treated as a robber; he is acknowledged by the representatives as the chief of the party, and even of the canton, because La Vendée has its own laws, and its own religion. The dreadful right of war has conferred on him privileges, which from

information on the subject. It is, however, certain that Louis XVII. was to have been given up to Charette. Monf. de Chat — was to have taken him from the castle of Choisi, whither it was stipulated that the Republicans should conduct him; but the young prince died a few days before the period fixed for his liberty. I will not repeat all that has been said on this occurrence. I am not convinced; and I will not believe evil, but when it is impossible to do otherwise.

time

time immemorial existed between the powers, which politics, ambition, or other interests divided; thus we no longer tremble for his life, or, at least, he will not terminate it like a criminal. Such are the reflections which must occur to the mind of every man, who regards the rights of men as sacred. The most incredulous, or the most partial persons cannot doubt, but that there was a secret treaty. Let us consider the character of Charette, and we must suppose some very great advantages induced him to take the national cockade, and receive in his camp the representatives of the revolution, and to dine with them; there must have been powerful motives to induce him to make such a sacrifice.

Repose succeeded the noise of arms; the labourer sought the spot where was once his humble cottage; he constructed a hut there, and confided to the earth with joy that grain which he hoped to reap in peace. Charette traversed these desolated fields, consoled his brave companions, encouraged their labour, and dispensed his benefits with
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that affability and affection which rendered him dear to every heart.

When the peace was made, Charette sent back the labourers, to cultivate the land, and reserved only the hired troops in his camp at Belleville, whom the commissioners of the negotiation supplied with provisions.

The country, once so ruinous, where the birds of night only were heard, began to smile on the labours of the cultivator. The timid shepherdes might already number her little flock, and unite her melodious voice to that of the inhabitants of the air, in rendering thanks to the Almighty.

Charette, relying on the performance of that engagement which he had contracted, numbered anxiously the days and hours which were to precede the restoration of his young sovereign, to reign in La Vendée; in expectation of that time, when, like Henry the Great, he might by his virtues oblige his deluded people to acknowledge him. But this unfortunate prince, this pledge of our

love, sunk under his misfortunes ; the illustrious descendant of so many kings is no more ! As a beauteous flower which exhibited to the astonished eye the rich gifts of nature, and attracted the attention of the cultivator, bends its faded head when it is neglected by his protecting hand ; so this royal child, deprived of the tender cares of a mother, falls a victim to languor and melancholy, and sinks under the reiterated misfortunes which undermined his constitution.

I will not attempt to describe the grief of the Christian army ; if even those who had no interest in the fate of this innocent victim, could compassionate his lot, how acute must have been the feelings of his faithful defenders !

This ancient and venerated race was not extinct by the death of the prince ; his uncle succeeded him : the cries of sorrow and distress were followed by those of "*Long live Louis the Eighteenth.*"

The Convention repenting of their consent to a peace so glorious for Charette, and
seeing

seeing the progress of their arms in other countries, seized the pretext of this proclamation to break the truce, alledging as a reason, that the Vendéans had infringed the laws of the Republic, by recalling into France a prince proscribed as an emigrant.

Hostilities were consequently renewed; war again raged, and nature, who had begun to smile on these desolated countries, was once more condemned to a fearful silence.

Dare I paint the devastations and carnage which were endured by Brittany, Poitou, Anjou, Maine, and Normandy? No! my sensibility refuses so painful a task; I will abridge the dreadful recital. Who could hear without anguish the particulars of that fatal contest; relation against relation, friend against friend, the son opposed to the father, the father armed against the son, and the blood of Frenchmen bathing the earth on all sides? O my country! O unhappy France! may the Almighty cast a pitying eye on thy misfortunes; may he calm that inveterate

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rage,

rage, and those cruel dissensions which lay thee waste; may he restore thy peace and happiness!

But I must finish the painful task I have imposed on myself. Of what efforts is not friendship capable, since in retracing this melancholy subject my own wounds bleed afresh.

The brave Stoflet had followed the example of Charette in exchanging the murderous sword for the peaceful olive. The Chouans of Brittany were astonished at seeing the morning of a bright day once more illumine their hemisphere. But fatal discord again shook her flaming torch, and spread terror and dismay. The reaper leaves his fields, and exchanges with a sigh the instruments of agriculture for the devastating sword of the fierce God of war.

It is well known that Mons. Cormartin, and the other chiefs of the Chouans, were arrested during the truce by the jealousy of

of the commissioners of the Convention who were at Rennes*.

The army of La Vendée weakened by its successes as well as by its defeats, and finding it difficult to obtain recruits†, was obliged to contract its boundaries. It remained quiet because the enemy found a difficulty in attacking it. This civil war was repugnant to the feelings of Frenchmen; but the conquests of the Conventionals furnished them with reinforcements of Belgians, Liegeois, and Batavians, who preferred serving the Republicans here, to acting against their sovereigns, whose vengeance they dreaded.

Thus Charette saw new troops brought against him daily, whilst he found it very difficult to procure reinforcements. Nothing however could shake the firmness of his mind, and though he had been totally deserted, he

* See the Memoirs of Danican.

† The deserters preferred joining the Chouans; their method of making war was better suited to the inclinations of the soldiers.

would

would not have forsaken the holy cause, and his last sigh would have been for his king.

One of his greatest enemies has pronounced his eulogium. “ *Charette’s courage was invincible, he preserved in dangers an unalterable tranquillity, and a presence of mind seldom seen : he was insinuating, enterprising, indefatigable, and active. He kept the field a whole winter against thirty thousand men, with an army of only five hundred adventurers.” Thus Therfites could not refrain from doing justice to Agamemnon. Alas ! these were the last efforts of the hero of La Vendée ; but how numerous were the trials through which he had to pass before he reached the end of his career !

The Loire was an insurmountable barrier which prevented him from protecting the descent at Quiberon. “ We must, said he, at all hazards, effect a junction, or we are lost.” The brave army under the

* See the French Journal, entitled *L’Ami des Patriotes*, of April 1796.

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command of its courageous chief, was ready to hazard every thing. The hope of supporting the brother of his king, who for some time had earnestly solicited his assistance, made him resolve to leave no means untried to accomplish his purpose. The Duke de Bourbon, a descendant worthy of the Conqueror of Roquoy, emulous of the fame of his father, and not satisfied with the laurels he had gathered in the plains of Alsace, was expected to join the Christian army; and from one extremity of the kingdom to the other, the name of Condé rallied all the faithful Frenchmen under the sacred banner of religion and honour. Charette's advice to effect this important junction was not followed. Who could foresee that so noble an enterprise would be attended with such destructive consequences! The fatal list of the unfortunate victims of this expedition fell into the hands of the hero; he saw there the names of his relations, his friends, and his countrymen; a cruel presage of the fate which awaited him! His brother at length joined him; but it seemed as if heaven permitted this moment of happiness

to

to prove his firmness. They had scarcely met, when duty called them to the field. Charette did not lose sight of his beloved friend; he saw him brave danger, lose himself among thick battalions of the enemy, and appear again covered with the blood he had shed. He trembled for a life so precious; his fears were too well founded; a ball struck him, he fell, and his eyes were closed for ever.

O reader, if thou hast a brother or a friend, conceive the grief of Charette. From that fatal day his cheerfulness forsook him, a tender melancholy succeeded, sometimes he was plunged in a deep reverie, at others, tears trickled down his cheeks. These affecting scenes were only the prelude to one more dreadful to his family, and to his fellow soldiers, whose love he had gained by sharing their fatigues and their dangers.

The Convention, who found even his name formidable, proposed to him to withdraw into another kingdom, with his fortune, or to retire to some city, where

might

might live in tranquillity, under the protection of the constituted authorities*.

But could Charette abandon his faithful soldiers; could he disgrace seven years of glory by a baseness? No! If he must fall, he resolved to die as he had lived, like a true French Chevalier, like a Christian Hero, worthy the esteem of his king, and the favour of his God.

Numerous Republican Cohorts advanced and pressed on Charette's army. He endeavoured to gain a more advantageous post. After the example of Turenne, he determined to reconnoitre it himself. If that great man met a more sudden death†, the

* I cannot answer for the truth of this paragraph, not having been able to procure intelligence on which I could depend; but it appears that after his examination he frequently demanded the letter which had been written to him on this subject: he mentioned the date and the contents, and the person who had possession of it, without effect.

† It is well known that Marshal Turenne was killed by a cannon shot on a reconnoitring party.

fate

• fate of Charette was rendered more cruel
• by being deferred.

At the head of fifty men he was surrounded by five hundred; he defended himself with his accustomed bravery, and succeeded in cutting his way through the enemy. But he escaped this danger only to fall into one still greater; almost all his escort fell; he received three wounds, and the loss of blood added to the incredible efforts which he had made, weakened him so much that he was unable to support himself. Two faithful Germans, who were generally near his person, carried him into a neighbouring wood, hoping by their care to restore him to life: alas! they soon fell victims to their attachment. A villain, unmoved at the situation to which he saw this great man reduced, pointed out the place of his retreat. He was attacked; his two soldiers fell at his side; and he would doubtless have experienced a similar fate, if his enemies had not perceived that his arm, by being in a sling, prevented his resistance, and that it was impossible for him to defend his life.

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It is not prosperity, but adversity which makes virtue appear in all its brightness. Thus Charette, in irons, preserved the same firmness, and was as calm as on a day of triumph at the head of his army. The composure which appeared in his countenance attested the purity of his heart. He was not ignorant that death awaited him; he resigned his body to his enemies, but they had no power over his soul; that soul which felt not the injuries they did him, which was a sacred asylum, where neither fear, nor weakness, could penetrate. His avaricious persecutors expected to find great riches in the possession of the commander of the Royal and Christian army, who never saw an object of compassion without relieving its distress!

He had only a few pieces of gold sufficient for his daily expences. His portfolio contained the commission of Lieutenant-General, bestowed on him by his august master, and the portrait of Louis XVI. and his unfortunate family; and upon his breast was discovered a holy relic, and the sacred sign

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of

of our redemption. The people assembled in crowds to meet him. They surveyed him with an emotion of mingled fear and respect. Full of admiration for this great man, to whom they could not refuse their esteem, not one disrespectful expression was heard; on the contrary, the people seemed to sigh in secret at the severity of those cruel laws which threatened to deprive France of its firmest support in condemning to death this illustrious hero.

He was at first conducted to Angers, which was supposed to be intended for the place of his execution; but fate ordained that he should drink the cup of bitterness to the dregs. It was in his native city, amidst his family, that he was condemned to terminate his glorious career, and give an example of courage and heroism to the world.

In the painful preparation he appeared unmoved; answering all the questions which were eagerly asked him, with that modest simplicity and natural politeness which characterise a great mind,

Bold

Bold in the testimony of his conscience, he appeared before his judges unembarrassed, and unawed. At the instant when his sentence was about to be pronounced, all eyes were eagerly fixed on him, all scrutinized every feature of his face with the greatest attention. Men either hoped or feared, according to the difference of their political sentiments, to discover that weakness so pardonable at such a moment. He was just then speaking to a person near him; he stopped, listened to his sentence without emotion, and continued his conversation with unaltered tranquillity.

O power of Omnipotence! to whom every thing is possible, who canst by thy command annihilate the universe, wilt thou permit this cruel sacrifice? But what do I say? Kings of the earth, is it possible for you to reward the merit of this hero? The Supreme Being alone is able to crown so many virtues.

The fatal instant approached, the minister of religion advanced, Charette conversed a moment with him, and walked with firmness towards

towards the place of execution. He observed the crowd with a steady look, and saw with a melancholy pleasure in the eyes of many, tears which they could not restrain. He commended his soul to God, his family to his king, and then gave the signal to the soldiers, by whose muskets he immediately fell.

Such was the fate of this celebrated man, whose talents and virtues were the astonishment and admiration of Europe. Humble in prosperity, and great in adversity, firm in the field of battle, and humane after victory; in vain would envy tarnish the memory of this hero. The just and holy cause which he sustained and defended till death, gives him an eternal claim to the esteem of every sovereign, and to the veneration of all nations among whom religion and honour are sacred.

F I N I S.

